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AUTHOR Taugher, C. David
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ABSTRACT

Guidelines and suggestions for obtaining a professional position in the corporate community are presented. Although the focus is on communications-related positions, the suggestions are general enough to be useful to anyone seeking a corporate job. The paper begins by discussing basic philosophies and realities of the corporate community with an emphasis on competition and profitability. Suggestions are then offered for locating a job opening, getting an interview, doing the proper things during the interview, and following up the interview. The suggestions include making use of as many options as possible when looking for a job, using the resume and letter of application to "sell" oneself to prospective employers, doing research on the company to determine which skills should be emphasized during the interview, maintaining a positive attitude, taking the initiative whenever possible in the interview, and using a thank-you letter and a telephone call to follow up. (DC)

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JMP Learning Group

Jack Morton Productions Inc.
830 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
212 758 8400

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INTERVIEWING FOR COMMUNICATIONS-RELATED POSITIONS IN THE CORPORATE COMMUNITY

C. David Taugher, Ph.D.
Project Director

JMP Learning Group
Jack Morton Productions, Inc.
830 Third Avenue
New York, NY 10022
(212) 758-8400

Paper presented at the annual Speech Communication Association convention, November 11, 1983, Washington, D.C.

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Interviewing for Communications-Related Positions in the Corporate Community

During the 1982 (Louisville, KY) Placement Service Committee business meeting I was asked to express my views on what students seeking non-academic jobs in communications-related areas of study needed most. My response was that they needed easily applied advice for securing these jobs. This response led to the Placement Services Chairperson's request that I put my views in writing, hence this paper.

This paper's purpose is to describe various philosophies, attitudes, techniques, and tips on how a student having one or more communications-oriented degrees goes about finding a job as a communications professional in the corporate community. No theories, research paradigms, pedagogical methods, or analytical assessments are presented. This paper is an admittedly subjective view on how to go about finding a professional position in the corporate community. Start by determining whether the corporate route is, in fact, the direction in which you wish to pursue.

A. BASIC BUSINESS PHILOSOPHIES

If you want to ply your trade as a corporate professional, you should know the basic philosophical and economic ground rules.

Point 1 By nature, business is competitive. If you want a business career, whether you are a competitive person or not, you will necessarily interact in a competitive environment. To participate in the rat race, or not to participate that is the question...

Point 2 Businesses operace to generate profit. If this surprises you, I suggest you stay in the academic environment, start your own business or take a long vacation to a LDC (lesser developed country) in order to appreciate our capitalist system because you've got a lot to learn. Profitability is literally and figuratively the "bottom-line" with which corporate leaders concern themselves.

If you and your skills facilitate the organization in achieving profitability, then you will have no trouble finding work with commensurate rewards (just ask a few systems engineers and computer hackers turned millionaires in high-technology industries). If you and your skills do not achieve profitability, then the reverse is true (don't bother asking the thousands of automobile workers, steel workers and soon to be mail clerks and mailmen out of work because their jobs were or will be replaced by more productive and thus profitable means).

Point 3 Personal growth and self-satisfaction is encouraged as it relates to corporate growth and satisfaction (profitability). You will likely experience ample opportunities for personal growth as long as that growth is seen as profitable to the organization <u>by your superiors</u>. And while we're on the subject of superiors, organizations are robust with them.

If you can't work for someone else or be subordinate to others, I suggest the same advice for you as I did under Point 2.

Point 4 Corporate life requires that you be accountable. While there exists some accountability in academe, the downside risks for the business equivalent of missing a class or canceling office hours are much greater. You can always make up a class by squeezing the lecture material into the next session. Corporate community policies are less forgiving, and breaking them is usually more costly.

Point 5 Even though certain business philosophies are unfair, inefficient and even downright stupid, chances are you won't change them. Don't give in without whatever fight you wish to put up, but know as best as possible what you're getting into before you commit yourself.

B. PROSPECTING AND OTHER "SELF-SELLING METHODS"

Point 1 Use the classified ads from a newspaper located in an environment in which you'd enjoy living. Even though the best jobs are probably not advertised, and even though some of the jobs were filled even before the newspaper hit the stands, you cannot afford not to use the classifieds for two reasons. First, you can make excellent contacts with at least some corporate leaders. And second, classifieds provide you a comprehensive overview of where the jobs are located, who's getting them, desired qualifications, and which companies are hiring. Besides, you never know - people do get jobs from answering classified ads. Use them for all of these reasons.

Point 2 Attend professional conferences or meetings whenever your schedule and budget permits. Many corporate leaders, especially those in communications-related businesses, attend conferences to keep their social science knowledge up-to-date with their business practices. They also attend to meet and observe individuals having knowledge and skills well suited to their business's needs that they might wish to hire.

Point 3 Make yourself and your interests known to others by networking. The more networking you do in as many different business, social, and athletic circles as possible increases your chances for employment. Think of yourself and your job hunting objective as a chain letter: the more people who know about you, the greater your chances are of having your efforts pay off. Networking is also a rewarding way of meeting new people and finding new friends.

C. GETTING A JOB INTERVIEW

Point 1 Write a resume that sells yourself and those specific skills that you could provide an employer. Limit your resume to two pages. Place your most powerful and impressive characteristics on the first page. Be specific. Eliminate verbiage that says little. Be consistent in your style, and use a format that looks professional and reads easily.

Point 2 Write a letter of application that is energetic, succinct, assertive, and action-oriented. Present yourself as someone special - a prospect that deserves a look.

The letter of application's purpose is to get an interview. Focus on that purpose and choose your words carefully. Also, you may wish to include a photograph of yourself depending on what you look like. Communications-related industries are highly image conscious. Your physical looks and appearance, whether you think it's fair or otherwise, is a significant part of that image.

Point 3 Visit a potential employer even when you don't have a scheduled appointment. If you're lucky, you may get an unscheduled interview that results in a permanent position.

D. THINGS TO DO DURING INTERVIEWS

Point 1 Dress for success from head to toe. A well groomed appearance and a $300 Brooks Brothers suit might very well go unnoticed when you arrive for your interview wearing docksiders. Also, when in the corporate community, dress like the natives. If you want to be one of "them," dress like one of "them."

Point 2 Sell your abilities and skills as they relate specifically to satisfying employer needs. This requires that you do pre-interview research to determine those needs. Doing your

homework really tips the scales in your favor. It shows you're prepared, willing to take initiative, and know how to get a job done without requiring direct guidance. I've never met an employer who didn't feel that each of these characteristics were positive.

Point 3 Sell yourself as an individual seeking specific intrinsic and extrinsic job factors (review Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory for the specifics) that you wish to accomplish in a growth-oriented, team atmosphere. The important words in the previous sentence are yourself, individual, job factors, accomplish, growth-oriented, and team. Highlight them as they apply specifically to the position available and the employer needs that you've been able to identify.

E. THINGS NOT TO DO DURING INTERVIEWS

Point 1 Do not have a negative or defeatist attitude. The self-fulfilling prophecy is for real, especially during employment interviews. Positive attitudes and behaviors most often produce more positive attitudes and more positive behaviors. Your positive outlook may get you a choice professional job if you don't watch out!

Point 2 Do not focus explicitly on your own personal needs and interests as part of the phatic communication that goes on during the interviewing process. People like to talk about themselves. Interviewers are people. Interviewers like to talk about themselves.

The better the interviewer's experience, the more likely he/she will view you as favorable. Constructive, healthy interaction between interviewer and interviewee make for a successful experience for both parties.

Point 3 Don't wait for the interviewer to be asking all the questions or examine the critical skills necessary to perform the job's responsibilities. Take the initiative whenever possible and let your assets and job-related qualities be known. Think pro-active, not reactive. Anticipate questions before they're asked, respond articulately and succinctly to them, and look for the interviewer's nonverbal feedback for reinforcement.

F. INTERVIEW FOLLOW-UP

Point 1 Send a thank-you letter. Keep it short and simple. It's the thought that really counts.

Point 2 Follow the letter with a personal phone call. Humans need reminding, and it's your job to provide it.

Point 3 Cross your fingers and hope for the best, because as professional as corporate decision-makers are in their personnel selections, there still exists an element of luck in getting the job you're seeking most. More jobs have been filled by being in the right place at the right time than by any other non-systematic method. On this point I speak with the most useful of learning methods known -- experience.